



Veterans News

Contact: JP Tremblay
Jerry Jones
Jaime Arteaga
Legislation and Public Affairs
916-653-2192
April 29, 2009

CalVet Secretary Tom Johnson Returning to Civilian Life

After more than five years of serving the veterans of the Golden State, and more than 42 years of public service, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) today announced that he will be retiring effective May 13 in order to spend more time with his wife and eight grand children.

"I have been in public service for most of my 42-year professional career, following my graduate education and certainly the last five plus years have been the most rewarding and satisfying," Johnson said in a message sent to the staff of the Department.

"I have been honored to work for a governor who truly understands and appreciates the role that veterans have played in preserving the freedoms and the way of life we have in the United States. He has been very supportive of me and this Department and I have been grateful for that," he said. "It has been a privilege to work on behalf of the veterans and their families in California and to work with a CalVet team that is constantly improving and is dedicated to giving the best in care and service to our veterans."

Johnson will be returning to Visalia where he and his wife have maintained a home for more than 40 years.

Governor Schwarzenegger announced Secretary Johnson's retirement today and a copy of his statement can be found at the following link: <http://www.gov.ca.gov/index.php?/press-release/12162/>.

Governor Schwarzenegger appointed Johnson, a Vietnam Era US Army veteran with more than 34 years in healthcare management, as Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs on February 12, 2004. As Secretary, Mr. Johnson has overseen an annual department operating budget of approximately \$300 million, a Farm and Home Loan program with assets of more than \$2.2 billion, and more than 1,700 employees statewide.

During his time with CalVet, several major accomplishments have been realized. Three new Veterans Homes of California in Lancaster, Ventura and West Los Angeles are under construction and set to open in the fall of this year and the spring of next year. In addition planning is well underway for two more homes in Redding and Fresno. He has also overseen significant improvements at the state's three existing homes including the creating of a Memory Care Center at the Yountville Veterans Home, the reopening of the Skilled Nursing Facility at the Barstow Veterans Home and the re-modeling of showers at the Chula Vista Veterans Home.

Secretary Johnson was also instrumental in getting the long-stalled Northern California Veterans Cemetery moving forward and opened. The new cemetery located in Shasta County in the community of Igo was dedicated in November 11, 2005 by Governor Schwarzenegger.

There have also been major improvements to the CalVet Home Loan Program which have led to the program maintaining its strong bond rating of AA and AA- despite the difficult economic downturn in the housing and bond markets. He has also led the efforts with the Governor to obtain a change in federal law that allows veterans entering military service after 1977 to be eligible for CalVet's best loans funded with general obligation bonds.

He has also overseen an expansion of the Veterans Services Division including hiring a former CVSO to oversee the division that works closely with the County Veteran Service Offices in 54 counties throughout the state. He has also expanded cooperation with other agencies and federal agencies including the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the State Department of Mental Health, the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Prevention and the Employment Development Department leading to ongoing and improved outreach efforts to veterans. He has also overseen the highest level of cooperation between the California National Guard and the Reserve Units in this state to the point where staff from CalVet and the County Veteran Services Offices are participating in pre-mobilization and post-deployment programs for both the Guard and Reserve.

CalVet provides outreach to veterans reentering civilian life after having answered America's call to military service, by helping them claim their earned veterans benefits, provides low-cost loans to acquire homes and farms, and when the time comes, provides aged and disabled veterans rehabilitative, residential, and medical care and services in home-like environments at the California Veterans Homes.